

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
EB-08 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /075 W
-----083752 061255Z /75

P 052230Z JUNE 78
FM AMCONSUL QUEBEC
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1360
INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY
AMCONSUL MONTREAL PRIORITY

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE QUEBEC 0193

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ECON, CA
SUBJECT: PARIZEAU TO MAKE YET ANOTHER COUNTEROFFER ON SALES
TAX ISSUE

REF: QUEBEC 0192

1. FINANCE MINISTER JACQUES PARIZEAU ANNOUNCED OVER THE WEEKEND THAT HE WAS PUTTING TOGETHER A NEW COMPROMISE PROPOSAL ON THE SALES TAX ISSUE. PARIZEAU SAID THAT THERE WAS STILL ROOM FOR COMPROMISE AND HOPES AND AGREEMENT CAN BE REACHED SINCE "THE WHOLE BUSINESS HAS LASTED LONG ENOUGH AND SHOULD BE FINISHED WITH." HE ADDED THAT HE WOULD SUBMIT HIS NEW PROPOSAL TO OTTAWA SHORTLY.

2. IN THE MEANTIME, LIBERAL LEADER CLAUDE RYAN TOOK PAINS TO KEEP HIS DISTANCE FROM THE LATEST PROPOSALS BY FINANCE MINISTER JEAN CHRETIEN (REFTEL) WHICH WERE BEING LABELLED THE "RYAN OPTION." RYAN TOLD A NEWS CONFERENCE THAT A SOLUTION WOULD HAVE TO BE REACHED WHICH WOULD NOT PENALIZE THE QUEBEC TAXPAYER THE WAY CHRETIEN'S PROPOSALS DID. WHILE THE LIBERAL PARTY WOULD CONTINUE TO BACK THE PQ

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POSITION, RYAN ASSERTED THAT PARIZEAU HAD BEEN TOO QUICK TO REJECT CHRETIEN'S LATEST PROPOSALS. HE SAID THAT CHRETIEN'S OFFER COULD CONSTITUTE THE BASIS FOR A COMPROMISE AND THAT PARIZEAU'S OVER HASTY REFUSAL INDICATED THAT PARIZEAU WAS PLAYING POLITICS RATHER THAN KEEPING THE TRUE INTERESTS OF QUEBECERS IN MIND.

3. COMMENT: SEVERAL ANALYSTS HAVE POINTED OUT THAT, IN FACT, THE "RYAN PROPOSALS" AND THE "CHRETIEN PROPOSALS" ARE ALMOST IDENTICAL. RYAN IS AWARE, HOWEVER, OF THE POPULARITY OF PARIZEAU'S POSITION AND IS WARY ABOUT GETTING HIS PARTY IDENTIFIED WITH THE CHRETIEN VIEW. BY ATTACKING PARIZEAU FOR "PLAYING POLITICS" RYAN MAY BE LAYING THE GROUND-WORK FOR ENDING THE OPPOSITION'S UNANIOUS APPROVAL OF THE PQ POSITION. ALSO, HE IS NO DOUBT HOPING TO FIND SOME WAY OF ENDING THE POLITICAL FIELD DAY THE PQ IS ENJOYING AT THE EXPENSE OF MR CHRETIEN. MCNAMARA

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SALES, TAX LAW
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 jun 1978
Decapton Date: 01 jan 1960
Decapton Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978QUEBEC00193
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: n/a
Errors: n/a
Expiration:
Film Number: D780236-0073
Format: TEL
From: QUEBEC
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197806111/aaaafmri.tel
Line Count: 77
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON MICROFILM, TEXT ON-LINE
Message ID: b2274f7e-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 QUEBEC 192
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2175304
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> srp 970822
Subject: PARIZEAU TO MAKE YET ANOTHER COUNTEROFFER ON SALES TAX ISSUE
TAGS: ECON, CA, (PARIZEAU, JACQUES)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/b2274f7e-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014